CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1.   A method for shredding documents rendering information contained in the documents unintelligible, comprising the steps of:

determining a desired cut pattern for a document;

adjusting one or more cutting devices in accordance with the desired cut pattern; and

cutting the document into segments in accordance with the desired cut pattern.

2.   The method of Claim 1 wherein the step of determining a desired cut pattern for a document includes the steps of:

providing an image of the information contained in the document; and

processing the image in accordance with a predetermined set of rules to determine the desired cut pattern.

3.   The method of Claim 2 wherein the step of providing an image of the information contained in the document includes the steps of:

scanning the document; and

storing the scanned image.

4.   The method of Claim 1 including the step of disposing of the cut segments of the document in a disposal bin.

5.   The method of Claim 1 wherein the one or more cutting devices comprises an adjustable document shredder.

6.   The method of Claim 1 wherein all cuts are in blank spaces on the document.

7.   The method of Claim 6 wherein no more than one cut per segment will traverse a mark on the document.

8.   The method of Claim 7 wherein the number of cuts traversing a mark on the document will not exceed a predetermined limit for each page of the document.

9.   The method of Claim 2 wherein the image of the information contained in the document comprises a digital image.

10.   Apparatus for shredding a document rendering information contained in the document unintelligible, comprising:

a document reader for providing an image of the information contained in the document;

a processor coupled to the document reader for analyzing the image to determine a desired cut pattern; and

a document shredder responsive to instructions generated by the processor for cutting the document into segments in accordance with the desired cut pattern.

11.   Apparatus as in Claim 10 further comprising an input tray for storing the document and for feeding pages of the document to the document reader.

12.   Apparatus as in Claim 11 further comprising an intermediate paper tray for receiving pages from the document reader after each page is read, and for subsequently feeding the read pages to the document shredder.

13. Apparatus as in Claim 10 further comprising a shredder controller coupled to the processor and to the document shredder, responsive to instructions generated by the processor for controlling the document shredder.

14. Apparatus as in Claim 13 wherein the document shredder includes adjustable cutting components responsive to cut control signals generated by the shredder controller to adjust the size and position of cuts in the document in accordance with the desired cut pattern.

15. Apparatus as in Claim 13 wherein the shredder controller is coupled to a document input tray, the document input tray responsive to feed control signals generated by the shredder controller to feed pages of a document to the document reader and to the document shredder in a coordinated manner ensuring that the desired cut pattern for a page is determined prior to that page being cut into segments.

16. Apparatus as in Claim 10 wherein the desired cut pattern is determined in accordance with a predetermined set of rules.

17. Apparatus as in Claim 16 wherein all cuts made in accordance with the desired cut pattern are located in blank portions of the document.

18. Apparatus as in Claim 16 wherein no more than one cut per segment traverses a mark on the document.

19. Apparatus as in Claim 16 wherein the number of cuts traversing a mark on the document will not exceed a predetermined limit for each page of the document.

20. Apparatus as in Claim 10 wherein the document reader comprises a scanner.

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